

The Builder.

No. CXVI.

SATURDAY, APRIL 26, 1845.



ANANT of attention to what may be termed minor matters in the erection of dwelling-houses, sometimes leads to serious inconvenience and expense. We were called in not long ago to explain how it happened, that when there was a fire in the dining-room, smoke invariably came through the joints of the floor above and from under the skirting, and rendered the apartment almost useless. Worse still, there were other rooms in the house similarly affected by other fires. On examination, the cause was obvious: the brickwork was badly done, the flues were not properly pargeled, and the smoke consequently found its way through the joints of the brickwork between the ceiling and the floor, where the walls were not plastered. This very serious defect is by no means unusual. Operatives, speaking generally, have ceased to feel interested in the production of good work; all that they desire is to get over the ground, and very often this is the case with their masters too. The house will be sold, they hope, as soon as it is finished, and they leave the purchaser to discover the defects, and remedy them if he can.

Sometimes, the particular evil of which we are speaking is caused by the carpenters in fixing the skirting grounds; a header is driven in and a crevice formed, through which the smoke escapes. Very often, the source of the evil is discovered with difficulty, for the smoke, being confined between the ceiling and the floor, may travel to some distance, and make its appearance in an opposite direction; even when discovered, it cannot be remedied without considerable inconvenience and expense.

Considerable injury is caused to many fabrics by the want of a little care when fixing the window-sills. The stone sill is not properly weathered, and does not extend sufficiently under the wood sill of the frame, so that if the latter shrink, or the brickwork settle ever so slightly, the rain-water constantly finds its way between the two, and does serious mischief. A small fillet of mastic at the junction of the wood and stone may be applied remedially, but ought not to be needed.

To the badness of the brickwork executed at this time in the neighbourhood of the metropolis, we have alluded in our pages more than once. Hasty, bad work, induced by competition and the operation of speculative builders, has become so much the habit of our bricklayers, that it is difficult to find men capable of producing superior work, or, at all events, it is difficult to induce them to abandon their hasty, careless, mode of proceeding, and exercise the skill they possess.

The way in which the walls of the majority of houses are "blown up" now-a-days, must be distressing to those who desire to see our operatives advance in knowledge, and the arts of construction improved: half-hollow, improperly banded, and not of perpendicular, they seem prepared expressly for premature decay and ruin. In Manchester and some other places brickwork is still practised as an art. We are not, however, now dealing with the general question of construction; our object

was simply to allude to two or three minor defects in ordinary modern houses, the result merely of thoughtlessness and the want of care.

Shaking floors, which produce a running obligato accompaniment to every movement upon them, might be avoided in many cases if the strutting were properly, instead of improperly, executed. Two nails in each strut, instead of one, and the exercise of some little thought, so as to be able to wedge up the whole soundly, would often prevent a nuisance without any extra cost worth consideration, the removal of which, if incurred, might entail an outlay of many pounds.

THE ART-UNION OF LONDON.

On Tuesday last, the Theatre Royal Drury-lane was filled to the ceiling by the members of this important association, to receive the report of the committee, and distribute the amount subscribed for the purchase of works of art. The house presented a most animated and elegant appearance; stage, stalls, pit, boxes, and gallery, were alike crowded with well-dressed persons; and when his Royal Highness, the Duke of Cambridge, accompanied by the Duke of Mecklenburgh Strelitz, appeared on the stage, to take the chair, precisely at twelve o'clock, his Royal Highness was received with loud and continued cheering.

On taking the chair, the president briefly congratulated the subscribers on the prosperity of the association. "Last year," said his Royal Highness, "the subscription was 14,000l.; this year it amounts to 15,440l. Now when we consider that in the year 1837, when we began, we only collected 490l. I think there is every reason for saying that we are thriving; and I most sincerely hope that we shall continue so. After saying these few words, which I trust will be satisfactory to you, I will call on the honorary secretary to read the report."

The Hon. Sec., Mr. George Godwin, F.R.S., then read the following

REPORT.

For the ninth time the committee have the great satisfaction of announcing the continued and increasing prosperity of the Art-Union of London, a more extended and better appreciation of its great objects, and clearer evidence of the goodness of its plan and working.

The subscription for the present year amounts to the sum of 15,440l. 5s., and would have been larger, but for the misapprehension that Lord Montagu's Act (under which the present distribution is made) applied simply to the past year, and that as no fresh Act on the subject had been passed, we were not recognized by the legislature. In reality, however, the Act in question remains in force until the 31st of July next, before which time, as there is every reason to believe, the association will be placed on a firm and permanent basis by an Act of Parliament, to be brought in by the Right Hon. Thomas Wyse, as chairman of a committee of the House of Commons appointed in June last to consider the objects and results of Art-Unions, and the most expedient and practicable means of rendering them most subservient to the improvement and diffusion of art through the different classes of the community. The minutes of evidence and the report of the Parliamentary Committee have been printed, and, when made public, will doubtless afford many valuable suggestions for the future conduct of this association.

It is gratifying to find that the late agitation of the subject and this inquiry have not had the effect of changing the opinion of any early friend to the Art-Union of London, so far as is known; while it has even already induced many, who entertained doubts on the matter, to give it the advantage of their countenance. And here they cannot omit offering publicly respectful thanks to his Royal Highness the Duke of Cambridge, President, for the interest H. H. manifested in the successful issue of the late proceedings, and his personal endeavours on several occasions to obtain it. His Royal Highness has himself brought the subscriptions of various members of the Royal

Family, and has been graciously pleased at all times to give assistance to the committee.

The list of provincial and foreign secretaries has been increased considerably, and now numbers 334. In addition to New York, Mexico, Nova Scotia, Hobart Town, Ceylon, Bombay, and Singapore, mentioned in the last report, the society has now active correspondents at Ouluents, Wiesbaden, Aix-la-Chapelle, New Brunswick, Dominica, Monte Video, La Guayra, Toronto, in Montreal, and last, but certainly not the least in importance, at Canton, in the Celestial Empire.

The prizeholders of last year purchased 253 works of art, including two pieces of sculpture. These were exhibited for the usual time, at first to the subscribers and their friends, and afterwards gratuitously to the public, and were visited by 250,000 persons without the occurrence of any accident.

Relative to the selection of the works of art on that occasion, it is the painful duty of the committee to reprobate in the strongest terms the conduct of one of the prizeholders, who sought unworthily to divert the funds of the association from their proper course for his own pecuniary advantage. The artists to whom he applied proved themselves men of honour and integrity, and his scheme failed. The committee minutely investigated the occurrence, and received the fullest proof that the selection ultimately made was a bona fide transaction, or they would assuredly have declared the prize forfeited, and allowed the subscriber to seek what remedy he might. They deemed it right, however, with a view to the attainment of the objects of the association and the protection of artists, to make the "Regulations as to selection" more stringent than they were before, and have accordingly provided that no arrangement whatever shall be made, or attempted to be made, between a prizeholder and an artist, or by any parties on their behalf, in the selection of a work of art by which a prizeholder may obtain, or attempt to obtain, the return of a portion of the amount of a prize, or other valuable consideration; that no prizeholder shall sell, or attempt to sell, the right of selection; and that should any attempt to evade the published regulations be discovered, the amount of the prize shall be forfeited and merge in the funds of the society. In this determination they are quite satisfied they will receive the support of all who appreciate rightly the real objects of the association, and they would state emphatically, it is only those they desire to find in the list of subscribers. The engraving due to the subscribers of last year, "The Castle of Lochin," will be delivered, in pursuance of the notice already sent to every subscriber, on and after the 7th of May next.

"The Convalescent from Waterloo," engraved by Mr. G. T. Doo, after Mr. Mulready, R.A., due to the subscribers of the present year, is approaching completion. In addition to this print the subscribers will receive for each guinea paid, a series of designs in outline illustrative of Thomson's "Castle of Indulgence," made by Mr. William Himer. The drawings have been placed in the hands of Messrs. Webb, Whitfield, H. W. Colliard, and Joubert, and the engravings from them will be distributed as soon as they are completed.

Every subscriber for 1845 will receive an impression of a line engraving, "Jephthah's Daughter," after Mr. O'Neill, by Mr. Peter Lightfoot, which is already far advanced, with such other advantages as the committee may be able to afford.

For the subscribers of some future year the committee have been enabled, by the kind permission of the artist and of the proprietor, Mr. Willis, of Goodrest, Berkshire, to place in the hands of Mr. C. Rolfe and Mr. Frederick Heath, two pictures by Mr. Edwin, R.A., "The Last Embrace," and "The Neapolitan Marriage," to be engraved by them for the society and distributed as a prize.

The committee look anxiously to the result of the offered premium of 5000l. for the best original picture illustrative of English history. The cartoons are to be received in competition on the 1st of next January, and the committee venture to repeat to the artists of the United Kingdom their earnest hope, that a work will be obtained for engraving creditable to them and to the country.

A statement of the engraving account, still open, will be published with this report.